

## Regan Brough Interview

Name: Regan Brough

Education: BM in bass performance, BYU 2006

Profession: Bass player for the U.S. Army Blues Jazz Ensemble

Location: Fort Myer, Virginia

Web site: <http://www.usarmyband.com/>

*What are the best resources you suggest for those interested in this field?*

It really depends on your emphasis, but a great online resource would be the New Grove Online Dictionary. I was on that all the time at school. Also a great resource would be the Music Library at BYU. I didn't start using it until my junior year, and so I feel as though I wasted my first two years, because you have access to a lot of great equipment free of charge and scores by all kinds of composers, and I would look through them to my heart's content.

I would also encourage students to use the ALMA lab in the HFAC, which has a computer notation program called Finale, which is an important skill. I would use that all the time at BYU since I like to compose and arrange, and the time I spent using Finale was invaluable. I use it now, and though it isn't required for my job, I can contribute and continue to educate myself at work in ways I wouldn't have been able to otherwise.

*What would you suggest students read or listen to?*

I'm a firm believer that if you want to learn to play, conduct or compose in a certain musical style, you must listen to it. You can read about it all you want, but you'll never learn it until you start to listen to it, dissect it and figure it out. It's the same with learning a language, you can read all about French, but if you can't hear someone speak it or the pronunciation, you'll never be able to speak French the way the French do. Music is a language, and you should listen to it as much as you possibly can, especially the style you want to learn to play. If you want to play like Miles Davis, then listen to Miles Davis; and don't just listen, transcribe what he does, learn how to replicate everything he does, every dynamic, nuance, articulation etc. A lot of kids will just listen to pop music on the radio and then expect themselves to be able to improvise like John Coltrane; it just doesn't work. When I say you need to listen, I'm not talking about putting on background music, but that your listening is your main focus—you're trying to figure out how the music works, what's the form, why does this one part sound so cool, why does it move or inspire you? It's the difference between *passive* and *active* listening.

*What other advice would you give someone interested in this field?*

You have to work really hard. Don't even think about entering the performing profession if you're not willing to work. The competition is very stiff, and it can be difficult to balance your family with your spirituality and your job.

*How have you balanced your family and career?*

Make it a priority. If I wanted to, I could spend more time at work. I still get my work done, but I could spend way more time away from my family. You need to set goals and you have to remember that life is a balancing act, so it's not as if you're going to suddenly arrive one day at the end of your goal of balancing your family with work—it requires constant evaluation, reassessment and plans to keep what has worked and to change what hasn't. A wise man once told me that balance is actually the wrong word because that implies sacrificing one thing to focus on another, and while that still happens, he encouraged me to take all the various aspects of my life, be they spiritual, my education, job, family, and the list goes on, and learn to *integrate* them all into one and make them a whole that is you.

*What has brought the most frustrations in your career?*

If anything [the stiff competition and the work] has been motivating. There are some people who have been performing longer than I've been alive, and, for me, getting to play music is an opportunity that I enjoy. After awhile a lot of musicians start to get tired of playing the same things over and over and let performing become a job. To them it's not fun anymore, and I refuse to adopt that attitude.

*How do you maintain that attitude?*

It's a choice. It's inevitable that I'll repeat music throughout my career—in that case, the only thing you can do is make the best of it. What good will whining do? To keep me balanced I play for a variety of groups and free-lance on the side, with different musicians and play different music. Most musicians thrive on variety—and in fact they should because you grow musically as you expose yourself to a wide variety of styles and musicians. Just make sure you're always trying to play with people better than you are, and they'll help you rise to the occasion. Playing with people that don't inspire you won't get you anywhere. Gigging is also a great way to help supplement your income.

*What brings you the most happiness or satisfaction in your career?*

I get to do what I love for a living, what's not to like? My particular job allows me to have the kind of family life I always dreamed of having and still provides me with the opportunity to be a performing musician. That's an uncommon combination. I don't have to sacrifice my priorities with this job, which is a blessing for which I am most grateful. Not only do I get to play with world-class performers, but as an arranger/composer, I have an in-house band (as well as other ensembles) that will play and record my music, with which I can experiment and try things out and they'll give me feedback. Not only will they play my music well, but they give me great advice as long time performers on their instruments—that doesn't exist anywhere in the real world for a composer.

*How long will you have your present occupation?*

I have my career for as long as I want it. The person I replaced spent his whole 34-year career in this job; there's a variety of reasons why he didn't leave and that's because there are so many good things it offers. I'll stay at least eight years with the Army, but if I choose, I can stay in and retire after I've been in for 20 years, which would be great—I'd be 44 years old! I also want to start teaching again when we're living in a more permanent place because I love to teach and am a better performer as I analyze and learn to verbalize what I do on a daily basis.

*How has being a member of the Church affected your work in this field?*

Being in the Army, I have to go where my commander tells me when he tells me, so I've had to work some Sundays. I think I worked only three Sundays last year, which is *really* good for a contracted musician. I've been offered work on Sundays but I simply choose not to take it. As a jazz musician I've had to play in bars and nightclubs, it kind of comes with the territory, but [my band members] all know I don't drink and they're fine with that and they respect my beliefs. I love being in an environment where I can share my beliefs. I do my best to be a positive person and the gospel helps me stay positive because when the daily nitty-gritty stuff comes along it's easier for me to let it roll off of my back because the gospel gives me an eternal perspective on things. People I work with notice that I bring a positive vibe to work and they appreciate it—the more I bring, the more they might decide to like doing what they do too! I attribute that capacity and ability to my membership in the church and my understanding of the gospel.